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ABSTRACT

Student activism of the seventies has changed from the highly visible, extracurricular sociopolitical activism noted in the sixties. This study examines the high school activity patterns of 63 currently enrolled Howard University freshmen. These students tended to be more active in school related extracurricular activities than in church related or social-group activities. Sex differences in frequency of participation were noted only for church related activities, with females showing more frequent involvement than males. The major finding was that students with higher self concepts tended to be more active in extracurricular activities than those with lower self concepts. (Author/RLV)

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HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITY PATTERNS
OF CURRENTLY ENROLLED HOWARD UNIVERSITY PERSONS

Wendell Joice
July, 1979

Research Report #79-3

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the high school activity patterns of 63 currently enrolled Howard University freshmen. These students tended to be more active in school-related extra-curricular activities than in church-related or social-group activities. Sex differences in frequency of participation were noted only for church-related activities (females showed more frequent involvement than males). The relationship of sex, GPA, and self-concept to frequency of participation was also examined. The major finding was that students with higher self-concepts tended to be more active in extra-curricular activities than students with lower self-concepts. Recommendations for planning student activities were made.

Student activism of the seventies has changed from the highly visible, extra-curricular socio-political activism noted in the sixties. Media representations of opinions of educators have suggested that student activism is dead. Recent writers have made alternate suggestions. Altbach (1979) wrote that the apparent change in student activism is due to a shift in the nature of student activity and not to a shift in student attitudes. He suggested, that there are new forms of activity which are school-related extracurricular activities such as lobbying, trusteeing, and collective bargaining; he cited student lobbying efforts directed against rising tuition and fees. Finally, the present author, among others, has noted an increased interest in social group activities (fraternities, sororities, etc.), especially on Black campuses.

All of the above observations may be accurate when speaking of the activities of students after they are enrolled in college; nothing has been said, however, about the activities of college-bound students before they enrolled in college. The purpose of this study is to examine the activity patterns of students prior to college enrollment. Knowledge of student activity patterns prior to college enrollment should help college administrators in planning activities that would interest freshmen as well as ease their transition to college. This will be the first of a series of studies designed to keep tabs on the changing interests of incoming students.

Using the earlier discussion (trends in student activities) as a guide, this study examines high school activity patterns of freshmen students currently enrolled at Howard University. This study also examines the relationship of three selected student factors to activity patterns. These factors are:

- sex
- first semester (college) grade point average (GPA)
- self-concept

Regarding the relationship of student factors to activism, a review of recent research literature revealed a few relevant studies. Alibaruho (1977), Centenobene (1974), Otto (1976) and Lambert (1973), all found positive relationships between socio-political or extra-curricular activism and self-concept. Studies of activism and academic achievement showed mixed results (Waters, 1973; Geller and Howard, 1972; Milliren, 1975; Otto, 1976). Regarding church-related and/or religious activities, Lee and Piercy (1974) and Hjelle (1975) found negative relationships between religion and self-concept while Foy (1976) found a negative relationship between religion and IQ.

Procedure

Seventy students were randomly selected from the freshman class at Howard University. These students were administered the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (Fitts, 1966) and a questionnaire with the following questions:

1. How often (average) have you been involved in social clubs, sorority, or fraternity activities?
2. How often (average) have you been involved in school-related extra-curricular activities?
3. How often (average) have you been involved in church-related activities?

The following Likert-type response scale was used for each of the above questions:

- A. Two or three times a year
- B. Once or twice a month
- C. Once a week
- D. Two days weekly
- E. Three days weekly
- F. More than three days weekly

Additionally, first semester GPA's were obtained for each of the

students. From the 70 students contacted, 63 were able to participate, 42 females and 21 males.

Results

The distribution of responses to the activities questionnaire is shown in Table 1. It can be seen that the patterns of activity level were similar for social group activities (fraternities, sororities, clubs, etc.) and church-related activities; the activity level pattern for extra-curricular activities was significantly different from the latter two types of activity ($\chi^2 = 28.12$, $p < .01$, d.f. = 10). It appears that the respondents had more frequent involvement in school-related extra-curricular activities than church-related or social group activities. Illustratively, it can be noted that 35% of the respondents were involved in school-related extra-curricular activities at least three days/week compared with 15% and 6%, respectively, for social-group and church-related activities. These patterns were similar for males and females; the only sex difference (Table 2) noted in these data was associated with church related activities. Females showed more frequent involvement in church-related activities than did males. ($\chi^2 = 10.66$, d.f. = 3, $p = .01$).

TABLE 1
Number of Students Involved
in Social, Extra-Curricular, and Church-Related Activities
by Frequency of Involvement

Activity Level	Type of Activity		
	Frat. Soror., Social Club	Extra-Curricular	Church-Related
Two or Three Times a Year	21	10	23
Once or Twice a Month	17	8	15
Once a Week	4	11	10
Twice a Week	9	11	10
Three Days a Week	4	4	1
More Than Three Days a Week	5	17	3

$\chi^2 = 28.12, p / .01, 10 \text{ d.f.}$

TABLE 2

Number of Students Involved in Church-Related
Activities by Sex and Frequency of Involvement

Activity Level	Sex	
	Male	Female
Two or Three Times a Year	13	10
Once or Twice a Month	2	13
Once a Week	4	6
Twice a Week or More	2	12

$\chi^2 = 10.66$, d.f. = 3, $p = .01$

Multiple regression analyses were used to assess the relationships between levels of participation in activities and three student characteristics: sex, self-concept, and grade point average (GPA). The actual analyses are detailed in appendices A through C. The findings can be summarized as follows:

Extra-curricular Activities - Analysis revealed a moderate relationship between level of participation in extra-curricular activities and self-concept. Self-concept differences predicted 20% of the variance in extra-curricular activities. There was a moderate tendency for students with higher self-concepts to be more active in extra-curricular activities. Sex and GPA were not predictive of extra-curricular activism.

Social Group Activities - Analysis revealed no substantial relationship between social group activism and the student factors considered here (i.e., sex, self-concept, and GPA).

Church-related Activities - For the most part, there was no substantial relationship between church-related activities and the variables studied here. There was, however, an interaction effect, the analysis of which revealed a moderate relationship between church-related activism and female GPA's. Females with higher GPA's tended to be high in church-related activism.

Discussion

High school students bound for Howard University tended to be more active in extra-curricular activities than in either church-related or social-group activities. Thus, they were more active in the formal, organized, school-related activities as suggested earlier by Beeler than in fraternities, sororities, social clubs, youth fellowships, etc. Beeler described current college students as desiring more sophisticated forms of activism; this apparently applies also to current high school students.

Earlier, it was noted that there was a possible increase in participation

in social-group or church-related activities among college students. This study neither supported nor rejected this contention as applied to high school students. It can be said, however, that if there has been such an increase among high school students, church-related and social-group activities are still not as popular as school-related extra-curricular activities.

Regarding student factors associated with activism, the relationship between self-concept participation in extra-curricular activities was the only noteworthy finding. Sex and GPA were generally not predictive of the frequency of participation in various activities. It is interesting to note that school-related extra-curricular activities such as student government may generally be perceived as involving leadership roles to some degree. Hence, it is not unreasonable to find that students with low self-concepts might be less active in such organizations.

In conclusion, it appears that freshmen may be receptive to school-related activities such as student organizations and student lobbying groups. Designers and planners of freshman programs may be well advised to focus on programs which are organized and sophisticated. Such programs, however, should be designed with a secondary goal of being sensitive to the needs of students with low self-concepts who would possibly not participate. The importance of administrative attention to activities and student interests cannot be over-emphasized. It is well documented that participation in student activities tends to be positively related to student persistence. Thus, successful efforts devoted to identifying and developing the extra-curricular interests of students could pay off in reduced attrition rates.

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APPENDIX

Table A

Regression of Level of Participation in Extra-Curricular
Activities on Sex, Self-Concept, and GPA-Summary Table

Variable	R ²	Simple R	Standardized Beta
Sex	.007	.083	-.203
Self-Concept	.207	.431	.469
GPA	.024	-.122	-6.239
Interactions	.055		
Total	.286	F= 2.915; d.f.= 7 & 51; p / .05	

APPENDIX

Table B

Regression of Level of Participation in Social Group Activities
on Sex, Self-Concept, and GPA-Summary Table

Variable	R ²	Simple R	Standardized Beta
Sex	.097	.311	-1.467
Self-Concept	.023	.106	.022
GPA	.000	.010	3.876
Interactions	.117		
Total	.236	F= 2.252; d.f.= 7 & 51; p / .05	

APPENDIX

Table C

Regression of Level of Participation in Church-Related Activities
on Sex, Self-Concept, and GPA-Summary Table

Variable	R ²	Simple R	Standardized Beta
Sex	.085	.291	-1.014
Self-Concept	.003	.013	-0.049
GPA	.026	.170	-0.519
Interactions	.140		
Total	.255	F= 2.487; d.f.= 7 & 51; p / .05	
Females	.168	F= 3.732; d.f.= 2 & 37; p / .01	
Self-Concept	.013	.115	.097
GPA	.155	.398	.394
Males	.129	F= .742; d.f.= 3 & 15; Not signif.	